

68 have his wife initiated so as to ward off bad luck. This is not the only example of the indirect intervention of one sex in a rite of the opposite sex. Allégret points out that it is a "woman who has had bad luck fishing" who "finds the ironwood for making the war fetish." It certainly seems that he has mixed up ngil with so, but the example remains valuable. Therefore, though traditional rites and the associations of initiates of these rites were strictly masculine or feminine, this does not altogether exclude the intervention of the opposite sex. No more can be said in our present state of knowledge (2).

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78] 2. The other important women's rite, ngombô, was more especially limited to old women. The participants built a sort of basin out of four banana trunks and their leaves, in which a vegetable biati /medicament/ was prepared that gave protection against theft. (J. B.)

Contemporary cults and associations, on the other hand, are open to both sexes, whether religious or politico-religious societies or mutual-aid associations.

The two principal politico-religious associations are the bwiti (or mbuti) and the ngôl, well described by Balandier (no. 175). They have spread to the north from Gabon and the Middle Congo and are not of Pahouin origin. They are beginning to penetrate Boulou country, where they have not been as successful as among the Fang of the south, undoubtedly because of the lesser degree of social destruction.

76] Bwiti was originally a "tyogo" ancestor cult, comparable to the Pahouin biéri, if one accepts Trilles. It must have first appeared among the Pahouin at the beginning of the century, probably among Pahouin families cut off from their clans and thus from the biéri and so rites, whose significance is primarily ethnic and familial.

77] Libreville was an important point of contact, not only between African peoples of different stock, but also with European religious systems. Modern bwiti borrows a great deal from Christianity and also from freemasonry, which was fairly widespread in Gabon before the war, especially in half-caste circles and on the periphery of principal towns.

78] In assuming this syncretist character, bwiti appears at the same time as a nationalist—or Africanist—movement and as a progressive movement abandoning the old cults or rather modernizing them. It is the

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648 object of official suspicion /67/ and rightly so, since it has free recourse to human sacrifice and to physical liquidation of apostates; it has assumed the traits of a secret, often surreptitious, society. The liberal character of the administration since the 1946 reforms has aided the spread of bwiti by giving emphasis to the frankly political side of its activities: the municipal elections of 1956 were in large measure a bwiti triumph.

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[M] Bwiti, like the old rites, first of all works to protect its members against the beyem (bearers of évu), and its whole purely African side recalls those ancient rites. As in ngil, members have to bring in to the society the bones of their ancestors; as in prohibited /criminels/ societies, they often have to agree to the putting-to-death or mutilation of a close relative; as in the melan, they drink a brew based on narcotic herbs that enables them to "see the bwiti." There is a sacred musical instrument, the ngomi harp, sculptured figures or reliefs, especially on hut poles, recalling the biéri cult, a special language, prohibitions, etc. But the weekly ceremonies are influenced by the Mass; the progressive degrees of initiation probably derive from freemasonry, as does the lodge organization; finally, the Bible is used and interpreted in a manner, often political, that can only come from Protestant influence.

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648 Balandier has shown how bwiti is trying to effect a reorganization of Pahouin society in Gabon, by providing it with an ideological basis, a total collective weltanschauung permitting an integration of customary forms of behavior with those resulting from the colonial situation. It would be interesting to carry his investigation into the Cameroons and into Spanish territory in order to study the reaction of very similar societies in quite different politico-administrative and economic contexts.

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648 Ngil is much more recent than bwiti and represents, perhaps, an even more striking example of politico-religious syncretism. Its source is an African interpretation, a mythology based upon Free French propaganda in French Equatorial Africa from 1940 to 1944. Nzela me Ngil—General de Gaulle—has become a "white" hero, sent to liberate the black man by revealing the white man's (1)

1. "Logically" one might have expected this role to be ascribed to Governor General Ebouf.

177 secrets and powers (power-ngui, to be related to ngol?). There is thus
 575 a "cargo-cult" side, already observable in certain traditions and
 648 pseudo traditions mentioned by Trilles and Largeau. The mixture
 of Christian and traditional elements in the ritual suggests bwiti, with
 definitely a greater ceremonial elaboration in terms of modern tech-
 nology, such as representations of aircraft, submarines, etc. The
 liberating-hero cycle involves a putting to death (by his white brothers)
 and a return by parachute, plane, or submarine—there are different
 versions, sometimes co-existing. The society's hierarchy copies that
 of the /68/ administration: the master of the lodge, wearing a kepi
 with star, is the nzela me ngol; he is accompanied by "presidents,"
 "presidents in chief," "commanders," "inspectors general," "governors"
 and "governors general," "militiamen," doctors, etc. (1). There is

1. One of the highest officers is the
 "adjutant of the guard," who is in charge
 of the police and of carrying out legal
 decisions.

a parallel female hierarchy, having, in particular, a "douane"
 /possibly "duenna"?—Tr./, who is supposed to have an eye on good
 relations between households. The political purpose is clear: the
 ngol hierarchy has often replaced that recognized by the administration,
 sometimes with positive practical results, thus connecting up with
 the movement for Pahouin regrouping in its Gabonese form.

575 In the Cameroons this regrouping has in fact quite a different
 77 aspect. It appears to be essentially a tentative social and political
 648 revival of clans rather than a tribal regrouping, which is not felt to
 be as necessary as in Gabon. It leans especially, on the religious
 level, more toward disciplinary /sic/ schism than towards syncretism,
 at least for the time being. Some of its leaders have left or wish to
 leave the missions to set up national churches that would allow, for
 instance, polygamy, but they do not oppose Christian dogma, which
 they proclaim that they accept, constantly maintaining that it is
 rather the missionaries who have altered it, consciously or not. Here
 the influence of the American Presbyterian Mission is predominant.
 It might be said that the Cameroons clans, especially the Boulou ones,
 have been organized into a pattern of Presbyterian synods. The move-
 ment has been less successful among the Beti, where Catholic

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64 influence is stronger, but there too one finds associations influenced by foreign types of ecclesiastical organization.

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56 Since 1946 the Boulou clans have formed associations, sometimes proclaimed in conformity with the law of 1901, and since 1950 gathered into the N'Tem-Kribi Tribal Union, which covers primarily Boulou, Fong, Fang, Ntoumou, and Mvaé. Each clan has a central board elected during an annual or biennial éulan, and local boards. Membership is not automatic: members have to apply for admission, pay subscription and entrance fees. At the core of each clan association there are "societies" of young people of both sexes, of married women, of nonvoters /abstinents/, etc. The young people's "societies" are certainly the most unusual. They were formed with official approbation at the time of the abolition of forced labor recruitment. The "societies" used to bargain with local authorities over projects like road maintenance or the construction of works of art /sic/, the money received being turned into a common account and used, either to help the members meet bride-price payments or other expenses, or—particularly—to arrange festivals and banquets.

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154 In large towns Pahouin migrants join de jure and de facto associations, generally within a tribal, not a clan, framework. These associations have protective and mutual-aid purposes /69/ and are sometimes quite powerful. To these should be related the tontines or subscription societies consisting of small numbers of laborers, servants, or minor employees, who pay into a common fund the larger part of their monthly wage, each member in turn being able to draw upon the sizable sum thus collected each month. The last two institutions are in no way specifically Pahouin, nor characteristic of the Cameroons or Gabon.

6. Law and Property

a. Sources

671 Pahouin law has always been complex. Formerly, it dealt primarily with the status and condition of persons /statut et de l'état des personnes/ upon which the property system was dependent. Under the influence of the economic changes brought about by colonization, the law with regard to property has become definitely independent of the law of persons, the latter being inclined to grow simpler with the dissociation of the old social and family organizations.

77 family, had a profound sense of being a member of a community
 621 scattered over several thousand square kilometers, whereas he did not
 631 feel strongly bound to his neighbor who belonged to another ayon.

648 The German colonial administration divided the country up into
 651 large chiefdoms as a solution to this difficult problem, a possible
 solution if the country had not been an ethnic as well as a clan maze.
 If the territory of the large tribes—Boulou, Band, Ewondo, etc. —
 had been a little more homogeneous, it would have been conceivable
 to entrust each region to a chief, at a higher level than that of clan
 allotments. But the confusion of peoples and their wide dispersion
 made any solution precarious. Authority was not always accepted
 without demur, and among populations with anarchistic tendencies
 it is not easy to build up a ruling class /aristocratie/ sufficiently sure
 of itself not to perpetrate abuses. There was no time for the system
 of large appanages to take root. Chiefs of cantons and village chiefs
 both rule over more limited but clear-cut territories; as representatives
 of the principle of jus soli their influence view with that of the clan
 movements embodying the jus sanguinis.

631 In Gabon, Pahouin leaders had the idea of mingling the two
 669 tendencies. Starting with the assumption that the villages were too
 small, they sanctioned a regrouping which would have allowed both
 stronger chiefdoms and a beginning of reassembling of clans.

The regrouping of the meyon does not seem to have been planned
 as a whole, nor does it seem that a territorial base had been thought
 of for each clan, which would have resolved, for the time being
 at least, the conflict between the law of things /droit réel/ and the
 law of persons /droit personnel/. Only a partial solution was con-
 sidered: the establishment of large, single-clan villages (1). In

1. J. Aubame, Renaissance gabonaise
 /Renaissance in Gabon/, Brazzaville,
 1947 (no. 171). Belaudice and Fauvert
 (no 177).

fact, and in spite of the endless difficulties connected with the trans-
 fer of population, the regrouping was able to give to the chiefdom
 a new prestige, by confirming its character as a territorial power on
 the one hand, and by binding it, on the other hand, to the meyon
 traditions. In the present state of affairs, cantons and even villages

631 include representatives of all the clans. Who then could exercise
 668 authority over such a motley population, if they were to follow purely traditional rules? Various methods are used for selecting chiefs. In one place people adhere to investing the legitimate heir of the lineage of the village founder. Elsewhere, a representative of the largest ayon is sought. Quite often, particularly in the Cameroons, the choice of chief by /130/ election is believed to allow the population to express their views, whatever the motives of selection may be. Will the village regrouping movement permit the establishment of a new, better-adapted system? A blaze of enthusiasm has gripped the Fang people, convinced that the new system will make it possible to solve all problems as by a magical formula, without sacrificing either traditional forms or individual anarchy.

In the Cameroons a few years ago the movement to regroup the meyon appeared just as likely to bring an end to all difficulties. More bound up with traditional institutions, the meyon organization movement set out simply to give some order to the intellectual and moral /behavioral?—Tr./ life of groups by codifying customs, taking note of traditions, and creating a collective awareness, a common clan sentiment, through periodic meetings, dances, and songs. In contrast to the movement in Gabon, the bisulan movement hardly touches upon the concrete, the economic field.

It is worth emphasizing that this movement did not question the administrative division into regions and subdivisions. The bisulan do not in fact seem to have voiced any criticism of this distinction, and the population of Dja-and-Lobo even expressed a lively wish to see Sangmelima raised to regional status and separated administratively from the N'Tem region.

698 In fact, though local organization at the lowest levels may not
 691 have found its bearings, at a higher level it seems to have become thoroughly incorporated in the country. When they reached Pahouin country, the European powers—France, Germany, Spain—set up a network of resident posts for the representatives of authority. In this country without crystallizing centers, the main town of a subdivision has become a town with a town's multiple functions, administrative, judicial, cultural (missions and schools), economic (road station, trade). A study of the journeys made by the rural population of the southern Cameroons shows clearly that these towns are no longer artificial centers but genuine points of attraction. The capital of